

GOLDWIN SMITH  
D.C.L. A BRIEF  
ACCOUNT OF HIS  
LIFE & WRITINGS  
BY JNO. JAS.  
:: COOPER. ::





# Goldwin Smith,

D.C.L.



## A Brief Account of His Life and Writings

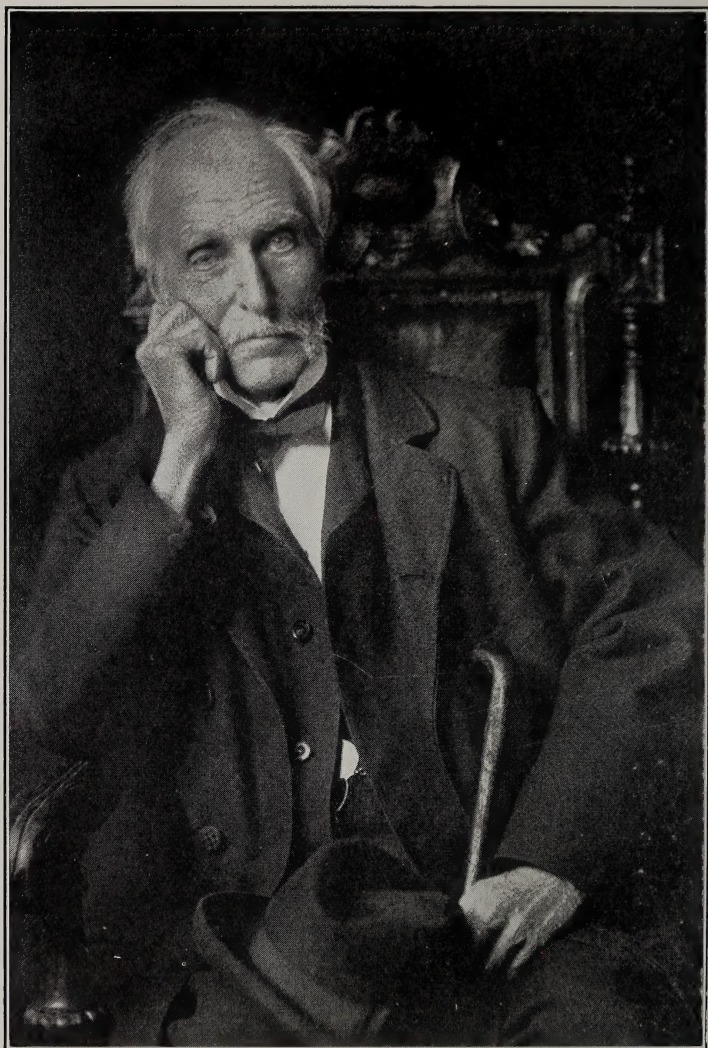
by

Jno. Jas. Cooper,  
Reading.









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PROFESSOR GOLDWIN SMITH, D.C.L.



THE PORTRAIT OF PROFESSOR  
GOLDWIN SMITH, D.C.L.,  
PRESENTED ON THE FIRST  
FEBRUARY, 1912, TO THE  
CORPORATION OF READING,  
BY JAMIESON B. HURRY, Esq.,  
M.A., M.D., WAS PAINTED BY  
THE WELL-KNOWN CANA-  
DIAN ARTIST, JOHN RUSSELL.  
GOLDWIN SMITH IS REPRESENTED  
AS SEATED IN HIS  
FAVOURITE ARM CHAIR. THE  
FIGURE, SO FAR AS SHEWN,  
IS LIFE-SIZE, THE ACTUAL  
CANVAS MEASURING FOUR  
FEET BY THREE FEET.

# GOLDWIN SMITH.

1823—1910.

In commemoration of Professor Goldwin Smith, D.C.L., our townsman, Dr. Jamieson B. Hurry has generously presented to the town a fine portrait in oils of that eminent man.

At the request of Dr. Hurry and the Finance and General Purposes Committee of the Reading Town Council the following brief appreciation of Goldwin Smith has been printed and published at the same time.

*February, 1912.*

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**O**N the old square-built house of dark red brick, 15 Friar Street, Reading, may be noted by the curious in such matters a red-stone tablet announcing it as the birthplace of Goldwin Smith.

In this roomy but unpretentious house dwelt Dr. R. Prichard Smith, a leading physician in Reading, and here on the 13th August, 1823, his son Goldwin was born. Entering St. Lawrence's Churchyard from Friar Street the large tomb on the right denotes the burial place of the Doctor and most of his family, but his famous son is buried far away in Canada, the land of his adoption. Affixed beneath one of the windows inside the Church



is a brass tablet in memory of Dr. Prichard Smith and his family. So many years have passed since Goldwin Smith took an occasional part in the political and social affairs of the town, so few are those remaining who had any personal knowledge of him, that the memory of him in the town of his birth has almost faded away. He lived but little in Reading save in childhood, and his long absence from England may perhaps to some degree account for the fact that the town which was the birth-place of one of the ablest Englishmen of the nineteenth century should almost have forgotten him. But in his old age he never forgot the happy childhood he spent in the old home in Friar Street. In a letter written some three years before his death to the present writer, he thus speaks of those early days :—

“ Many eventful years have passed since my childhood saw the triumph of the Reform Bill celebrated by a public festival in the Forbury, or Fyshe Palmer in his Whig uniform of blue and drab, chaired after the Election for the Borough. Reading must have grown from a town into a city. The site of the Row Barge, the little public-house on the London Road, which was the limit of my walks as a child, has no doubt been lost in a street. On the wall of my house here hangs a drawing of a part of St. Mary’s Butts which by this time is sure to have disappeared. No more can the stage-coaches be seen changing horses at the Crown and the Bear. The watchman no more calls the hour of the night. The little cake-shop in London Street, where I bought cakes, has grown into Huntley & Palmer, the cake-factory of the world. The large red-brick house in Friar Street, I learn from your article, still stands. My earliest recollection in life is being carried away from it by my nurse on an alarm of fire. Still stands old St. Lawrence’s Church. Beside it is the tomb of a household of which one member only survives, far away, but not forgetful of his old English home.”

Since his death at his fine old home, "The Grange," in Toronto, on June 7th, 1910, there have appeared many appreciations of the life and work of Goldwin Smith, and his own *Reminiscences* recently published give us vivid glimpses of a life strenuous beyond most in his earlier days, and full of work even to the end, when nearly all his great contemporaries had passed away from the arena.

The full story of his life has yet to be told, but to tell it will be no easy task for his Biographer. There is apparently little record of his earlier life beyond such of his recollections as he has himself given us, while much that he wrote may never be recovered or even traced by the most painstaking editor; for while his published works in book form are comparatively few, he was constantly writing articles, letters or reviews on a variety of topics for many newspapers and magazines. "His literary career began, so far as I can trace it," wrote Sir W. Robertson Nicoll, "in the *Saturday Review*, and among all the powerful pens enlisted in the service of that journal, his was the strongest." To close upon the end of a long life that pen of his was ever busy, and although he often chose unusual channels for the communication of his views on political, social or literary topics, he wrote with undiminished power, preserving that fine lucidity and perfect expression which gave literary beauty to his earlier writings.

Goldwin Smith was sent to Eton, passing thence to Oxford, and there his unusual ability and powers of mind soon discovered themselves. He matriculated at University College, gaining a Double First, winning also the Hertford and Ireland Scholarships, the Chancellor's prize for Latin verse, the Latin Essay prize and the English Essay prize. He was one of the Secretaries of the Royal Commission for the Reform of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge; and he held the Regius Professorship of History at Oxford from 1858 until 1866.



During the American Civil War he warmly espoused the cause of the North, speaking and writing vigorously on its behalf; but his closer connection with America was probably partly resultant from a lecturing tour he undertook in the United States in 1864. Four years later we find him elected to the Chair of English and Constitutional History in the newly founded Cornell University, and he finally left the United States for Canada in 1871. Long years of literary activity followed, but much of what he wrote is now difficult to trace, and the Bibliography which I have appended is very far from a complete record. Suffice it to say, that while his books are chiefly historical or biographical, he was a great controversialist from his Oxford days onward. To the last he took a living interest in the political and social questions of his time, both in Great Britain and America, bringing to bear upon their discussion the acuteness of reasoning and the independence of thought and judgment ever characteristic of him in speech or in writing.

Among his literary labours may be included the Editorship of the *Canadian Monthly* for two years, and the founding of two other journals, *The Week* and *The Bystander*, the latter not to be confounded with an English publication. But his contributions to literature cover a wide field, their scope revealing as one writer expresses it, "an immense range of culture."

The Irish Question always had an absorbing interest for him, and while so far back as 1861 he wrote his *Irish History and Irish Character* he published recently another book on the same topic, *Irish History and the Irish Question*. In the earlier volume we get a very full and impartial history of the Irish people from very early times. "It's annals," he says, "are the weary annals of aggression on the one side, and of rebellion on the other; of aggression, sometimes more, sometimes less, cruel and systematic, of rebellion sometimes more, sometimes less violent and extensive, but of aggression and violence without end." But he is always a calm,

outspoken, yet fair-minded historian, dealing quite impartially with both sides. His more recent book, while partly covering the same ground, brings the story down to our own time, and discusses the legislation on Irish affairs by Mr. Gladstone and others.

Over forty years ago he lectured on Pym, Cromwell and Pitt, and these were gathered into a volume entitled *Three English Statesmen*. It is perhaps his best known book, written with sympathy and appreciation, and is delightful reading.

His chief contributions to historical literature are the substantial volumes: *The United Kingdom: a Political History* (in 2 vols.), *Canada and the Canadian Question* (1 vol.), *The United States: an Outline of Political History* (1 vol.)

He issued in 1893 one tiny volume of *Poems, Bay Leaves*, translations into English verse from Latin Poets, while several specimens of his own Latin verse are to be found in *Anthologia Oxoniensis*, published in 1846.

His brief biography of William Lloyd Garrison is a fine appreciation of a moral Crusader, and is characterised by the finely balanced judgment and clear enunciation of great moral principles which made Goldwin Smith's advocacy of Abolition so powerful a factor in the long fight for the freedom of the slave.

Though for so many years a resident in Toronto, and long regarded as its most distinguished citizen, he was never a Canadian, but always an Englishman in Canada. Greatly interested in the country as he was, his views, tenaciously held and vigorously expressed, were often distasteful to the people amongst whom he lived. To the last he held fast to his often expressed belief, that eventually Canada and the United States will become one nation, and he would instance in support of his opinion the great similarity of manners, tastes and requirements of the two countries.



Never from his earliest appearance in public affairs was Goldwin Smith a party man ; his was too critical a mind, he was too independent a thinker ever to submit to the bonds of party allegiance ; but one cannot read his writings without realising that he was a most advanced and sincere Liberal, loving liberty, hating oppression, and full of zeal for that righteousness which alone can exalt any nation. Amongst the leaders, those outstanding figures who dominated the minds of their generation by sheer force of intellect, and their sympathy with progress and with the nobler aims of mankind, Goldwin Smith took his rightful place ; and although the readers of his pages may now be few in number yet his incisive pen has graven its mark on the political life and thought of two continents. Ever a fighter, he did not hesitate to turn sometimes the keen blade of reasoned argument against those with whom politically he was otherwise in agreement, but he was a controversialist who never stooped to take a petty advantage, nor suffered discussion to be tainted by personalities. A life-long seeker after truth, it often happened that his pathway towards it was one not trodden by more popular men, but he has left to us the memory of a strong, if lonely, champion, ever "without fear and without reproach."

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J. J. C.





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